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NOTES ON
THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF
WYCOMBE PARISH CHURCH.

By W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE, M.A.

Reprinted from the "Records of Buckinghamshire."

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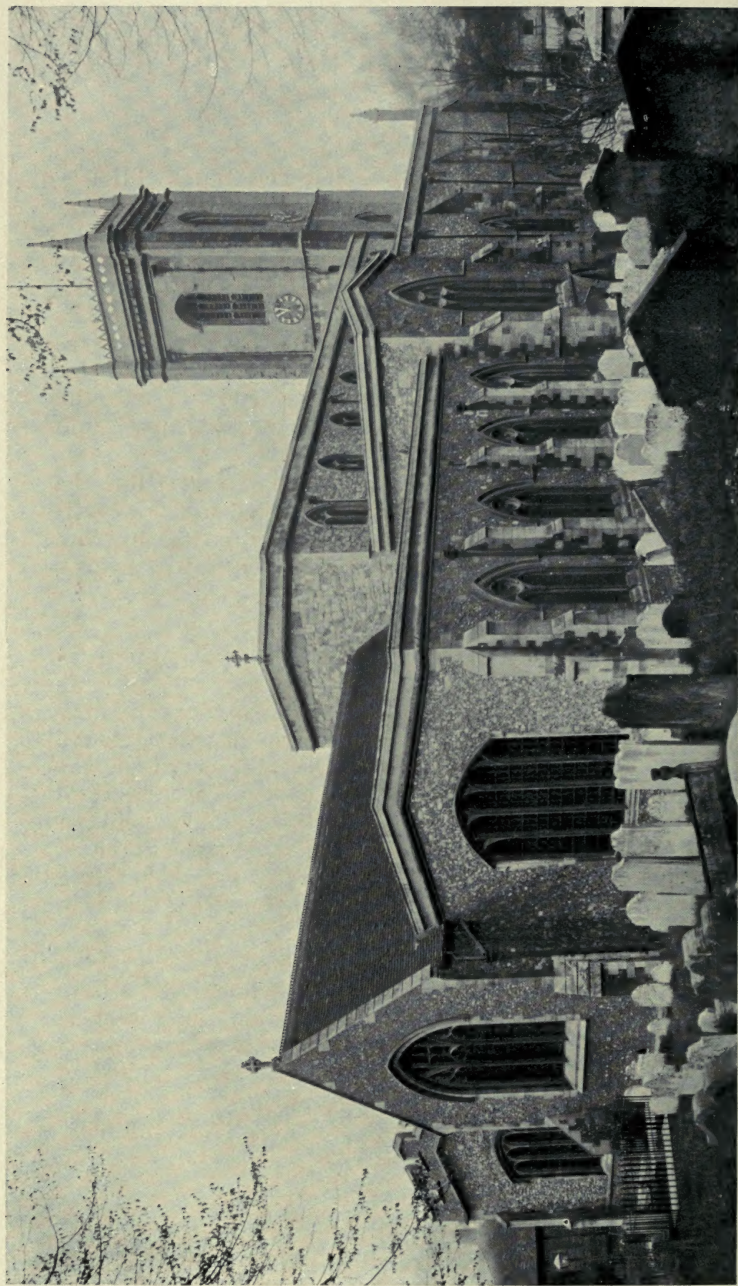
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ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

NOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, WYCOMBE.

Some months ago Mr. John Parker kindly lent to me a transcript of a contract preserved in the Public Record Office, dated 26th January, 24 Henry VII., between the "Wardens and Rulers of the New Workes belongyng to the Chyrche of Wycombe" and one William Chapman, of Chertsey, co. Surrey, whereby the latter covenanted and agreed to perform certain works in Wycombe Church.

Such contracts are not only extremely rare, but the light which this particular one throws upon a well-known phase in the development of our parish churches is such as to render it worthy of more than a passing notice.

Whether, as is probable, there was a church at Wycombe at the time of the Norman Conquest we have no positive evidence, the Domesday Survey being silent on the point. A scalloped Norman capital found in the north aisle wall,* and now preserved in the church, is proof that a building of some architectural pretensions existed here in the 12th century, and we know from a charter of Richard I. that the church of Wycombe was among the gifts of his father, King Henry II., to Godstow Nunnery before his death in 1189.

The existing church consists of a chancel of four and a half bays, with aisles or side chapels of four bays, a nave and aisles of seven bays, with south porch, and a western tower. (See plan, Plate viii.) There was also once a small two-storied structure outside the western end of the north aisle, but this has been destroyed.

The chancel has on each side an arcade of four four-centred arches carried by slender shafted pillars with

* Figured with other early fragments in *Records of Buckinghamshire*, vii. plate facing p. 271.

stilted bases, all of late 15th century date, but some slight differences in the bases point to the north arcade being somewhat the earlier. The east window is of three lights, but dates from September, 1872. The roof is also modern. The north chapel, except as to its roof and east window, is throughout of late 13th century work of excellent character. It is four bays long, and has a wide western arch carried by shafted piers with moulded capitals and bases. The windows in the north wall are all of two uncusped lights with a cinquefoiled circle in the head, with rear-arches carried by shafts with moulded circular capitals and octagonal bases; in the westernmost window, however, the capitals are carved with good foliage. The first three windows have the pointed heads of the lights carried by slender shafts, but these are wanting in the fourth or westernmost window, which is also distinguished by an additional outer order. The east window consists of five uncusped lights under a depressed arch, and is an insertion of later date. The roof is a plain one of very low pitch, perhaps of the same date as the east window.

The south aisle is also of four bays. On the south side are four wide and ugly windows with depressed heads, each of four uncusped lights, and the east window is of like character, but has five lights. The heads of the windows have apparently been deformed in late Tudor times. The roof is nearly flat, and of good character, carried by moulded four-centred principals with traceried spandrels above, springing from plain corbels. It is contemporary in date with the chancel south arcade. The western arch of the aisle is also of the same date as the arcade, but has continuous chamfered jambs instead of shafted responds.

The nave has on each side an arcade of seven pointed drop arches, with carved heads at the junctions of the hood-moulds (Plate ii.). The easternmost arch on each side is considerably wider than the rest, and has the outer orders carried down to the ground, but the innermost is carried at each end by a shaft. The other arches are similarly moulded, but have clustered pillars of good character with moulded capitals and bases. These latter are circular in plan, but the abacus is always octagonal.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.
THE NAVE, LOOKING WEST.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.
THE SOUTH DOOR AND INTERIOR OF PORCH.

Above the arcades is a clerestory of seven bays, each containing a pointed window of two cinquefoiled lights with a quatrefoil in the head. The roof, which is nearly flat, is contemporary with the arcades, and has traceried spandrels below the tie beams, springing from corbels with carved angels holding shields. The interval between the tie beams and the roof itself is also traceried. The present colouring is modern. The west wall is earlier than the arcades, and retains the arch and jambs of a late 13th century window, which has been divested of its tracery, and had the jambs continued to the floor to form an archway into the later tower (Plate ii.).

The south aisle is seven bays long, but the first or easternmost is nearly twice as wide as the others, and has evidently formed part of a former transept, the gable of which may still be traced in the upper part of the wall externally. It contains a large window of three pointed lights with cusped circles in the head, with rear-arch carried by shafts with carved capitals. Under the window is a "restored" doorway with depressed head. Just to the west of the window, about 15 feet from the floor, is a trefoiled light, now glazed. This had been blocked up, but was, it is believed, opened out in 1827, and then found to have been closed with a shutter or casement, the hinges for which remained. It probably had to do with an earlier rood-loft. The other windows in the south wall are of the same pattern and date as the westernmost in the north chapel, and, like it, have carved capitals to the rear-arches, and no shafts to the tracery. The window in the third bay is a modern "restoration" by Mr. Street, † who needlessly destroyed to make way for it a large 15th century window of several lights that had probably been inserted to light a chantry chapel in the aisle.

The fifth bay has, instead of a window, a beautiful doorway of two orders carried by detached shafts with carved capitals (Plate iii.), and a moulded rear-arch within. The doorway is covered by a fine porch, now

† The interior of the church underwent "restoration" at the hands of Mr. Street in 1873-75; the exterior in 1887-89, Messrs. A. M. Mowbray and J. O. Scott being the architects.

mostly new externally.† It has, however, within on each side an arcade of three trefoiled arches carried by shafts with carved capitals, and a ribbed vault with sculptured boss springing from angle shafts with carved capitals (Plate iii.). The only ancient feature outside is a late housing for the holy water stock in the eastern jamb of the entrance arch. Above the porch is a chamber; the entrance into it was through a doorway, now blocked, in the aisle wall, so high up that it can only be reached by a ladder. The west window is of three lights with cusped circles in the head.

The north aisle is of the same length, width, and date as the other, but is externally of four bays only instead of the seven of its fellow.

The first bay has clearly formed the north end of a transept, the gable of which may be seen in the rubble walling. It contains a large three-light window like that opposite, a "restoration" by Mr. Street, but the rear-arch, which is old, shows that a like window formerly occupied the same position. It has also a doorway under it as in the opposite transept, but original. Owing to the north transept having been two feet longer than the south, its gable wall projects that much beyond the aisle, instead of being in line with it, as on the south side. The second bay contains two windows, of the same pattern as those of the north chapel, with moulded capitals to the rear-arch shafts, and shafts to the tracery. The third bay contains one window only, the place of a second being taken by a pointed doorway with good moulded rear-arch (Plate iv.). West of the doorway, in the fourth bay, is another window. Beyond this, close to the west end, is a low pointed doorway into the basement of the destroyed chamber without, and above it, at the level of the stringcourse, is another doorway, which can only have been reached by a flight of steps against the west wall (Plate v.). This doorway led into the upper room of the chamber, which had also a square-headed loop, still visible, towards the church. The west window of the aisle is of three lights, and similar in design to the windows in the west wall of the south aisle and the old transept ends.

† The new work dates from 1893, when the porch was "restored" under the direction of Mr. J. O. Scott.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.
NORTH DOOR AND NORTH AISLE WINDOW.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.
DOORWAYS AT WEST END OF NORTH AISLE.

All the masonry of both aisles is of late 13th century date, and the transept ends were apparently remodelled at the same time. The aisles seem originally to have had gabled roofs, or steep sloping roofs resting against the nave walls, but when the nave was rebuilt these roofs were removed, the walls raised some feet, and nearly flat roofs put on with slightly traceried spandrels. The roofs over the old transepts have the rafters running the opposite way to those in the aisles, and they are of somewhat different character, with moulded principals. In the south aisle the roof springs on both sides from corbels carved as crowned or mitred heads, but in the north aisle the corbels in the outer wall are plain.

The western tower, which contains ten bells, is entered from the church by two arches. The one is formed by the cutting down of the old 13th century west window. The other is part of the tower itself, which has been built up outside and against the nave wall, evidently with the intention of ultimately removing the latter, but this has not been done.

The lowest stage of the tower has on the three free sides an ornamental plinth with traceried panels, which on the south contain small shields. In the west side is a square-headed doorway, and over that a modern three-light window. The middle stage has small two-light pointed windows on the north, west, and south, and the uppermost or belfry stage has on every side a tall, narrow transomed window of three lights. The whole is surmounted by the beginning of an ornate panelled parapet, now finished off by some poor work done in 1754. In the north-west angle of the tower is a circular vice.

The walling throughout the church is of flint rubble with stone dressings, plastered internally.

From this brief description of the church as it now stands it is time to turn to its architectural history.

A reference to the ground plan (Plate viii.), as well as to the existing wide first arches of the nave and the old transept ends, shows that the church was at one time cruciform, with a tower over the crossing instead of at the west end. And we may assume that in the 12th century the church consisted of an aisleless chancel

of no great length, a central tower and transepts, and a nave of five or six bays with narrow aisles.

Towards the end of the 13th century, about 1275, the aisles were replaced by others of greater width and architectural importance. On the south this width corresponds to the length of the transept, with the gable of which the new wall is in line; but on the north, owing to the transept being two feet longer than the other, while the aisle is of the same width as its fellow, the two walls are not in line. Concurrently with the widening of the aisles the south porch was erected, the western end of the nave re-built, and the transepts, if they were not also re-built, were re-modelled by the insertion of doorways and larger windows and the addition of buttresses. A large chapel was also built eastwards of the north transept with an arch of communication between them. This chapel now forms a north aisle to the chancel, but as the arcade between them is of much later date, it seems as if the chapel was at first an independent structure.

Towards the middle of the 15th century the re-construction of the nave was taken in hand. There is unfortunately nothing left to tell what was then existing between the central tower and the west wall. Possibly the first five bays were of Norman work, with a sixth bay of the same date as the new aisles. But all were now replaced by the existing series of six arches on each side, above which was also added the clerestory and present roof. The aisle walls were raised at the same time and new roofs given to them to accord with that of the nave.

A break of line under the clerestory windows suggests either (1) that the addition of a clerestory was not first contemplated, or (2) that the new arcades were built piecemeal in an older wall, as was not unusual, and the clerestory added afterwards. The beginning of this new work of the nave may perhaps be approximately fixed by the will of John Justyzer, dated 20th February, 1436, preserved among the corporation records, which contains the following items:

Item lego Fabrice ecclesie de Wycombe predicte xiijs. iiijd. Item ad empcionem unius Crismatorij argentei ijs. iiijd. Item lego ad sustentacionem unius

lampadis in choro ecclesie predicte xijd. Item lego
cuilibet lumini ecclesie predicte iiijd.

He also bequeaths the remainder of various tenements in Wycombe "Custodibus fabrice ecclesie de Wycombe."

Much about the same date as the re-construction of the nave the western tower was begun, and, as has been already pointed out, outside of and against the west wall. But it need not have been, and probably was not completed until a much later date. †

The chancel was next taken in hand. Of the nature and length of what was then standing we have no information. But it seems now to have been entirely re-built, with an arcade of four arches opening into the north chapel, to which it was made at least equal in length. The work was barely completed when another chapel of the same width as the other, but slightly shorter, was added on the south, and a similar arcade to that opposite pierced in the dividing wall. A wide arch of entrance was also made on the west from the south transept.

The enlargement of the church having now reached its limits, it was decided to take down the old central steeple, which was still standing over the crossing. The contract for carrying out this work is preserved in the Public Record Office,* and is that which has been so fortunately discovered by Mr. John Parker. It is dated 26th January, 1508-9, and, as it is in English, may be allowed to speak for itself:

Thys indenture made the xxvjth day of Janyver the xxiiijth yere of the Reign of King Henry the vijth be twene Thomas Pymme Gentilman Richard Byrch Nicholas Devon George Petyfer John Brasebryg and Thomas Baven Wardens & Rulers of the New Worke be longyng to the Chyrche of Wycombe on the oon^e pte And William Chapman of Chersey in the County of Sur^e Fremason on the other pte Wytnesseth that it is covenanted barganed & agreed

† Mr. Parker, in his *Early History and Antiquities of Wycombe*, states (p. 102), without giving his authority, that the new tower was built "in the year 1522, under the superintendence of Rowland Messenger, who had been Vicar of Wycombe from 1511 to 1539, when he resigned the living. The Tower was completed with much rejoicing, 'ryngyng of bellys, and pyping of Organs.'" Langley, too, in his *History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough*, says (p. 34) that the tower "was built in 1522."

* Ancient Deeds, D. 985.

be twene the seid pties in the forme Following that is to sey that the same Wiliam Chapman his executours or assignes shal before the feste of Seynt Laurens the Marter next ensuyng the date herof shall take down or cause to be taken down to the Grownde all the Stone and other stuff of an olde Stepull and appteynyng to the seid Stepull nowe stondyng & beyng be twene the quyer & the body of the Chyrche of Wycombe in the County of Bukyngham And also the seid William Coven^anteth g^aunteth & agreeth to take down or cause to be taken down all the Stones and other stuff of ij Crosse Arches w^t ther respondes set and nowe stondyng ayenst the seid stepyll w^t in the seid Chyrch of Wycombe aforeseid and Furthermore the seid William Chapman Coven^anteth g^aunteth and agreeth to make newe or cause to be made newe sufficiently vj respondes to iiij Arches belongyng whereof ij of the seid arches to raunge in lyke man^r as they of the body of the Chyrche doe and the iij^d arche sufficiently to be made be twene the ij newe hyles over the quyer Dore And also to make ou^r eu^y of the seid arches that raunge w^t the body of the Chyrche ij wyndowes lyke to them that byn in the Clerestory of y^e body of the Chyrche aforeseid And ou^r the Est wyndowe beforeseid oon wyndow w^t iiij lyghtes eu^y lyght genlased* And also to Fulfill all the wallys ou^r all the seid newe arches to the heyght of the body of the seid Chyrch And also to Corbell Tabyll Crest & ppoint assheler in lyke man^r as the body of the Church is And also to Rough Cast all his seid Newe Wallys And to pget them on the in syde And also to Fulfill up the Cross hyle walle on the North Syde to the heygh of the Crosse hyle on the South syde And to Corbell Tabyll ppoint assheler & Crest as the seid South hyle is And to pget & Rough cast the same And also to make ayen all the wallys that byn brokyn w^t the havyng a wey of the seid ij Crosse respondes And also to make ij Dores through his seid Newe Wark conveying thorough all the iij rode loft^e And to make as many Corbell as shalbe thought necessary be Carpenters to be^r all the res longyng & pteynyng to all the seid Newe Werke & to the

* A rare word meaning "cusped." See R. Willis, *Architectural Nomenclature of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1844), 55. I am indebted to Mr. M. S. Giuseppi, F.S.A., of the Public Record Office, for the correct reading and interpretation of the word, which is difficult to decypher in the original.

ij Crosse hyles And that he shall make suer & substanciall & save harmles all the Raunges of the Arches as wele of the seid body of the Churchē as the Newe Werkē And also all the raunge of Arches of the ij Newe Chapellys of our lady & seynt Katyn And the seid Wardens & Rulers shal pay or cause to be payd to the seid William Chapman for his labor & workmanship of the pmisses above wretyn xxxij ti stiling And a hors at the discession of the seid Wardens & Rulers to be paid in manⁿ & forme folowyng pt is to say Accordyng as the seid werk goth forward so the seid Wardens & Rulers to pay hym at ther discession And also the seid Wardens & Rulers to fynde to the said William all manⁿ of stuff pt is to sey stone lyme & sond & all manⁿ skaffold tymber necessary to the seid werkē And also shollys bokette Traves with a gynne & all yerⁿ werk as nayles & the Caryage of the same And furthermor the seid William coven^{ant}eth g^aunteth & agreyth pt if the seid werk be not substencially & sufficiently wrou[ght] & made in eu^y thing belongyng to Masons work And that work so adiuged insufficient by sufficient Masons pt then he coven^{ant}eth & g^aunteth by these presentē by a convenient & resonable tyme after the same Jugement to make the seid Werk wele & sufficient at his own pp^r cost & charge And the [said Wardens] & Rulers of ye said Werkē g^aunteth pt if the same William his executoure or assignes obs^{er}ve fulfyll & kepe all coven^{ant}ē g^auntē & agrement^s in these indenture^s wich on his pte oweth to be pformed & kept that then a sengle obligacion bering date the day of these wherein the same William Chapman by ye name of William Chapman of Chertsey in the County of Sur^r Fremason William Billesdon of * in the County of Berksher Fremason & Nicholas Benet of Clewer in the County of Berksher Fremason seually be bounden to the above named Wardens & Rulers of the seid Newe Werkē in a Cli. be voide or els to stonde in his full strength & vertue In wytnes wherof the pties above seid Entchaungeably have putto ther Seales the date is the day yere and place above wretyn

Wlilia [sic] Chapman

Endorsed :

And also the w^{it}innamed Wardens & Rulers of the seid Werkē coven^{ant}eth & g^aunteth by these p^{re}sente

* Bycester. (?)

that if the wⁱⁿnamed William Chapman lak or be hyndred of lyme sond stone or eny other thyng^e or stuff that be longeth to the Cov^{ante} wⁱⁿ wretyn up on a resonable warnyng moved & spoken by the seid William Chapman to the seid Wardens & Rulers that then the seid Wardens & Rulers shal pay to to hym & to his s^vant^e duryng the seid tyme that they shal lak ther wages besyde this Bargyn.

It will be seen from this very interesting document that William Chapman contracted to take down

- (i.) all the stone and other stuff of the old steeple, and
- (ii.) all the stones and other stuff of two cross arches, with their responds, "set and now standing against the said steeple."

These cross arches were evidently those which had been made in the western sides of the transepts when the nave aisles were widened in the 13th century; they and their responds were now to be done away with, and the wall made plain, as we see it.

The steeple and cross arches being cleared away, Chapman agreed next to construct three new arches with their six responds. Two of these arches were to range in like manner as do they of the body of the church, that is to say, they were to be in continuation of the nave arcade, and over each arch there were to be two windows like to them that be in the clerestory of the body of the church aforesaid. The third arch was that into the chancel, and is described as to be made between the two new aisles and over the quire door, viz. that in the roodscreen. Above this arch was to be a window of four lights. Chapman covenanted to "fulfill" or carry up all the walls over the said new arches to the height of the nave walls, to corbel-table, crest, and perpentashlar them in like manner as the nave walls, to rough-cast them outside, and to parget or plaster them within.

He also undertook to carry up the "cross hyle" or transept wall on the north side to the height of the cross aisle on the south side, and to treat it in the same manner as the walls over his new arches; also to make good all the walls that were broken with the having away of the responds of the two cross arches.

While his new works were in progress Chapman further undertook to make sure and substantial and to save harmless all the ranges of arches, as well of the body of the church as the new works, and also all the ranges of arches of the two new chapels on either side of the chancel.

It is not quite clear from the wording of the indenture whether the time-limit of St. Laurence's Day (10th August) applied to all the works above noted, or only to the razing to the ground of the old steeple.

A very cursory examination of the existing building is enough to show us exactly what William Chapman did. First, he took down the old steeple and its four arches opening east, west, north, and south, and the arches forming the western sides of the transepts. He then built (1) the two side arches which now occupy the interval between the 15th century nave arcade and the chancel, and the clerestory wall with two windows on each side over them, and (2) the present chancel arch and the gable above it.

Chapman's new arches in the nave closely follow as to detail the older arches west of them (Plate vi.), but there are naturally some slight differences, especially in the bases of his responds (Plate vii.). Owing to their wider span his arches are also taller. His clerestory windows are identical in pattern with the rest. The roof over the new bay differs slightly from the older work of which it forms a continuation, and the tracery in the spandrels is uncusped. The timbers, too, spring from corbels with shields instead of angels, and one of those on the north side is carved with a crowned silver lion on a red field; the others bear modern painting. The transept roofs are of the same date as the new bay.

Chapman's chancel arch was apparently masked by the roodscreen, and has flat jambs out of which the mouldings spring (Plate vi.). His window of four lights was duly made, and existed until Mr. Street's "restoration," when it was needlessly destroyed, and no trace of it can now be seen.

The roodscreen was evidently carried right across the church, for Chapman undertook "to make ij Dores through his said Newe Work conveying thorough all the iij rode loftes." On the north side the new arch is

wider than that on the south, and its eastern respond is so close to the wall that no doorway could have been pierced over it; but on the south side such a doorway may have existed, though not now visible on account of the plastering of the wall.

It will be noticed that the contract mentions, besides "the ij Crosse hyles," by which are meant the transepts, "the ij newe hyles," which are also referred to as "the ij Newe Chapellys of our lady and saynt Kateryn." It is clear from this (1) that the inclusion of the north chapel as part of the church by the building of the north arcade of the chancel, and (2) the addition of the corresponding chapel on the south of the chancel, had been carried out before the date (1508-9) of the contract, and that, as stated above, the razing of the old steeple was the last important change in the architectural history of the church. One further change seems subsequently to have been made: the rebuilding and lengthening of the easternmost bay of the chancel, and the alteration of the tracery of the window in the east wall of the north chapel and of all those in the south chapel. These works were apparently all done at the same time, for Mr. Parker tells me that previous to Mr. Street's "restoration" the chancel end had an east window and two side windows of the same plain character as those above described.

Before concluding this paper it may be of interest to see what evidence is forthcoming as to the arrangements of the church, before the changes of the so-called Reformation, from (1) the inventories edited by the writer in 1899 † and (2) the wills of Wycombe folk.

The inventory of 1475 mentions only the high altar, and no other furniture than the Easter "sepulcur of Tymber with a stole therto," "ij lectornys of tymbur," and "ij beris with ij Coffyns therto." But the additions to it also mention "seynt Nicholas Chauncell," which implies an altar of that saint, a "Ihē awter," and the Rood.

The inventory of 1503 also mentions only the high altar, the two wooden lecterns, the two biers and parish coffins, and the Rood. Four stools for "recter coryse,"

† *Records of Buckinghamshire*, viii. 103-145.

i.e. the *rectores chori* or rulers of the quire, are mentioned in the additions.

A number of wills of this same period contain the following interesting bequests: *

1496. William Shepewashe.

"lumiⁿi Salvatoris domini nostri Jesu Christi in eadem ecclesia." [30 Vox]

1500. Joan Redhoode.

to be buried "in capella sanctorum Nicholaⁱ Episcopi et Katerine virginis et martyris infra predictam ecclesiam . . . juxta sepulcrum mariti mei. cuilibet lumini iiij^d. altari beate marie ibidem unam torcham xij librarum et eidem ymagini beate marie anulum meum optimum aureum. Reparacioni capelle sancte Trinitatis eidem ecclesie conjuncte vjs. viiij^d. altari sancti Erasmi martyris in eadem ecclesia meum missale." [12 Moone]

1500. William Fryer.

to be buried in the church "in parte boriali juxta ymaginem Jhesu. guardiano altaris Jhesu ijs. iiij^d." [14 Moone]

1504. John Petefere.

"to the makyng of a wyndowe in the chapell of our blissed lady iiij^{li} vjs. viiij^d." [27 Holgrave]

1506. John Aley.

"to be buried in the Chapell of our blessid ladie in Wicombe. to the reparacion of the church xxs. to every fraternitre light within the same church iiij^d. to the Chapell of the blessid trinite next adioyning to the said Churche ijs. iiij^d." [12 Adeane]

1506. John Wilcockys.

to be buried in the parish church of Wycombe "before the Roode." "to every light in the same church gaderd by wardens iiij^d. to the reparacion of or lady chapell of my graunt xxij^{js}. iiij^d. Item I will that myn executo^rs shal content and pay for all the charges and costes in newe glasyng of the oon of the wyndowes in the same chapell. myn executors shall bye or doo to be bought a marbull stone to ley upon my grave w^t the pictu^r of myself and my two wiffes of vij fote in lengthe the stone" [21 Adeane]

* I am much indebted for these to my friend Mr. J. C. Challoner Smith, F.S.A., who has obligingly extracted them from the originals in the registers of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, now at Somerset House.

1509. Robert Bullock.

to be buried in the churchyard "nyghe my childern. To the light of seynt Clement xxd. To the reparacion of the newe worke of the same church xxs. or elles my best taynters." [27 Bennett]

The inventory of 1518-19 mentions (1) the high altar, (2) the "bourchauncel" and the "boure aulter," (3) the "Resurreccion aulter," (4) "Jhesus aulter," and (5) "Saynt Clementes aulter."

The Bower chancel or chapel is also mentioned in yet one more will, that of William Chalfaunt, of the date 1543:

If I die in or near Wycombe to be buried there "in a Chapell there wthin the saide church cauld the Bowre chappell in the Sepulture where Margarete Chalfount my late wyffe was and is buried." To the "reparacions" of the church 40s. "To the churchewardynes to the use of the same church in recompence and satisfaction of such leade and tyles as I did borowe of the saide churchwardeyns whiche is not yett fully paide and satisfied as I thinke in my conscience xiijs. iiijd."

[14 Moone]

We thus have mention of

1. The High Altar, in the chancel, in 1475, 1503, and 1518-19.
2. "Seynt Nicholas Chauncell" (additions to 1475 Inv.), otherwise called "the chapel of St. Nicholas the bishop and St. Katherine virgin and martyr" in Joan Redhoode's will (1500), and "the new chapel of St. Kateryn" in Chapman's contract (1508-9).
3. "The altar of the Blessed Mary" (Joan Redhoode's will, 1500); the "chapel of our Blessed Lady," in wills of 1504 and 1506; and the "new chapel of our Lady" in Chapman's contract.
4. "The bouchancel" and the "boure aulter" in the inventory of 1518-19; called also "the Bowre chappell" in a will of 1543.
5. The Jesus altar, in 1475, William Fryer's will of 1500, and in 1518-19. The light of Our Saviour, mentioned in a will of 1496, and

the image of Jesus in another of 1500 no doubt adjoined it.

6. The Resurrection altar, in 1518-19.
7. St. Clement's altar, in 1518-19, at which was probably the "light of seynt Clement" mentioned in Robert Bullock's will (1509).
8. The altar of St. Erasmus, in Joan Redhooede's will (1500).

There was also a chapel of the Holy Trinity* described as "joined to the church" in Joan Redhooede's will (1500), and "adjoynng to the said Church" in John Aley's will (1506). As there is only one place where evidence exists of a chapel having adjoined the church, viz. outside the west end of the north aisle, the upper storey of the building that formerly stood there was probably the chapel of the Holy Trinity.

In locating the other chapels and altars mentioned there can be no question that the chapel of St. Nicholas and St. Katherine and the chapel of Our Lady were "the ij newe hyles" of the chancel referred to in Chapman's contract. And as I hope to show that the Lady Chapel was on the north side, the south chapel must have been that of St. Nicholas and St. Katherine.

The chapel of Our Lady at Wycombe has been more or less of a puzzle for some time. Langley, in his *Hundred of Desborough*, refers to an indulgence in Willis's MSS. "from Richard de Graves [*sic.* for Gravesend], bishop of Lincoln, dated at Tinghurst, Bucks, 1273, for the reparation of St. Mary's chapel in the churchyard of Wycombe."† Lipscomb contents himself with the assertion: "It appears that there had been anciently a Chapel in the Churchyard at Wycombe."‡ The late Mr. John Parker, in his *History of Wycombe*,|| refers at some length to "the Chapel of St. Mary, called the

* The tenement of the chantry of the Holy Trinity is mentioned in two deeds of 1441 and 1471 respectively among the corporation records (see Appendix to the Fifth Report of the Historical MSS. Commission, 563, 564).

† Thomas Langley, *The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough and Deanery of Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire* (London, 1797).

‡ George Lipscomb, M.D., *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham* (London, 1847), iii. 649.

|| John Parker, *The Early History and Antiquities of Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire* (Wycombe, 1878), 130, 131.

Corporation Chapel." It is supposed, he writes, "to have been situate in a street called Bynethe brigge," which was afterwards named St. Mary's Street. He also quotes the entry from Browne Willis's MSS. given by Langley, and, after pointing out the existence of a chapel of St. Mary in All Hallows church, suggests that the Bishop of Lincoln "refers to some other Church Yard than that of All Hallows," perhaps the "Horsyn Churcheyerd" that existed elsewhere in the town. But he says: "Not a vestige of the Chapel remains, and the exact site of it is not known." He adds further that it "was rebuilt between the years 1338 and 1378, and was under the control of two Wardens, who were always burgesses of standing, and were indifferently styled 'Wardens,' 'Churchmen,' or Collectors of St. Mary's Chapel. But in the year 1338 we find four Wardens coming into office; and further they are styled 'Wardens of the Work' (custodes operis Beatæ Mariæ").

Following these local authorities, I have myself written in my former paper on the Wycombe Inventories that the chapel of Our Lady "was not that part of the parish church in which stood the altar of St. Mary. . . . but a separate building in the churchyard, stated to have been rebuilt during the 14th century."

Since writing the above I have come to the conclusion, after an examination of all the various documents referred to or existing, that there was but one chapel of Our Lady in Wycombe, and that from the first it formed part of the parish church.

The earliest dated reference to the chapel seems to be the indulgence of 1273 mentioned by Langley. The original, or a nearly contemporary copy, on parchment is now preserved amongst the Browne-Willis MSS. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford,* and so much of it as relates particularly to the chapel is here printed, for the first time:—

Omnibus Christi fidelibus . . . Ricardus Lincolnien-
sis episcopus salutem. . . . Omnibus
parochianis nostris et aliis . . . qui ad repara-

* Bodl. MS. 16303 (= Willis 10), fol. 118. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Falconer Madan, F.S.A., sub-librarian, for this and the following extract, and the particulars of the MSS.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.
THE NAVE, LOOKING EAST, SHOWING CHAPMAN'S ARCHES.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGH WYCOMBE.

BASES OF CHAPMAN'S ARCH (TO LEFT) AND OF THE OLDER ARCADE (TO RIGHT)
ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE NAVE.

cionem seu sustentacionem capelle beate Marie
in cimiterio ecclesie de Wicumbe erecte et
cantarie ejusdem de bonis pie contulerint
subsidia caritatis Tredecim dies de
penitencia relaxamus . . . Datum apud
Tingehurst. xvjo. Kalendas Decembris anno
Domini .Mo.cc°.lxx°. tercio et pontificatus nostri
xvjo.

On the next leaf (f. 119) of the MS. is another contemporary copy or original, also on parchment, of a second indulgence, dated 1276, by Anian bishop of Bangor, who was apparently acting as suffragan to the Bishop of Lincoln:

Universis Christi fidelibus Anianus
Bangorensis ecclesie minister humilis salutem.
. . . . Omnibus parochianis nostris aliisque
qui ad capellam beate Marie apud Wycumbe
accesserint et ad fabricam ejusdem capelle pias
elemosinas contulerint viginti dies de
. . . . penitencia relaxamus. Datum
apud Thame in festo Sancti Johannis ante
Portam Latinam Anno Domini. millesimo
ducentesimo. septuagesimo. sexto.

It is clear from these two documents that there was a chapel of Our Lady in the churchyard of the parish church of Wycombe in 1273, which was then being repaired or rebuilt, and that the work was still in progress in 1276. And the architecture of the widened aisles of the church and of the large chapel north of the chancel agrees so closely with these dates that there cannot be any doubt that in the latter we have the Lady Chapel referred to. The description of it as being "in the cemetery of the church of Wycombe" may, I think, be thus explained.

At the time of the building of the new chapel the chancel was probably of smaller dimensions than later, and was vested in the Abbess and Convent of Godstow as holders of the rectory, but the chapel belonged to the parish, and was apparently built independently of the chancel in the cemetery north of it. The evidence of this is not very strong, and is entirely architectural. It will be seen on reference to the plan (i) that in its present state as the north aisle of the chancel the chapel

is of considerable width; (ii) that the arch of entry from the old north transept, as seen from the chapel, is placed nearer to the north than the south side; also (iii) that the existing east window occupies the middle of the east wall. If, however, the chapel originally had a south wall of its own, on the line suggested on the plan (Plate viii.), the arch of entry would stand symmetrically as regards the chapel itself, and the chapel would be a building of more reasonable width, independent of and separated by a small interval from the chancel. Were it not at one time an independent structure, what has become of the arcade between it and the chancel, an arcade that must have been of some architectural importance? If, however, the present arcade points to the destruction of the south wall of the chapel, and the inclusion of it, for the first time, as an aisle of the chancel, Chapman's description of it as one of "the ij newe hyles" becomes intelligible, and we can also understand the reason for a new east window in the middle of the east wall in place of the original, which no doubt stood opposite the west archway.

Among the Corporation documents * are a number of deeds bearing more or less directly upon the history of the Lady Chapel. The earliest is an undated deed, apparently late in the reign of Henry III., whereby William Wauder grants to Hugh le Taillur a messuage upon the fee of the Abbess of Godstow for a yearly rent of 2s. 4d. to the Abbess and Convent, and of 2d. to the grantor,

Pro hac autem donacione. concessione. et warantizacione dedit mihi dictus Hugo 3s. 2d. annui redditus *in auxilium sustentacionis misse beate Marie virginis* imperpetuum in matrici ecclesie ejusdem ville.

By another undated deed, probably *temp.* Edward I., Ralph de Croindene [Crendon], son and heir of John de Croindene of Wycombe, quit-claims a piece of land

* Now in the custody of the Governors of the Wycombe Grammar School and Almshouse Foundation. I am indebted to Mr. John Parker for access to these documents, which has enabled me to verify the references to and quotations from them printed in the Appendix (pp. 554-565) of the Fifth Report of the Historical MSS. Commission.

lying beside the cemetery of the parish church of All Saints,

Deo et *Capelle beate Marie* de Wycumbe ad sustentacionem capellani ibidem Deo et beate Marie deservienti.

By his will dated Sunday next after the feast of St. Nicholas 1291 Thomas Waldere of Wycumbe leaves *inter alia* a bequest of 12d. to Stephen the chaplain of St. Mary; also an annual rental of 3s. "ad sustentacionem misse beate Marie in ecclesia de Wycumbe."

In "Leger Book No. 1" is entered on f. lxij a memorandum dated November 1309 of a remittance by the Mayor and Commonalty to William Outred of a rent of 14d. assigned *ad servitium beate Marie*, and on the same date of a remittance to Edmund Haveryngdon of part of a rent assigned *Capelle beate Marie*, and of another assigned *ad servitium beate Marie*.

On f. lxiiij is a memorandum dated 23rd June 1339 of the lease of a tenement "in vico de Froggemore quod Andreas le Goys nuper assignavit *custodibus operis beate Marie* et communitati Burgi de Wycombe." Another rent "*ad opus beate Marie*" is mentioned on f. lxiiij^b, under date June 1346, and the *custodes operis beate Marie de Wycombe* are named in another memorandum of the same year on f. lxv. This last entry shows that the wardens were four in number.

We also learn from the same authority (f. lxv.) that on the Tuesday before the feast of St. Gregory 23 Edward III. [12th March 1348-9] the will of Matthew son of Matthew le Fuller of Wycombe was produced, containing bequests to his son John of three separate properties, each of which was assigned "ad sustentacionem unius lampadis in ecclesia continue ardentem imperpetuum *coram altare beate Marie loco solito*," etc. Other memoranda of 1353 and 1361-2 (f. lxv^b) also mention the *custodes luminaris beate Marie*.

In 1354 the will of William atte Coumbe contains the following bequests:

Item lego Custodibus ecclesie de Wycombe .ij. sol. annui redditus percipiendi annuatim de tenemento Ricardi le Carpenter quod quondam fuit Johannis de Mareys ad inveniendum .i.

torticis ad levacionem Corporis Christi in Capella
beate Marie de Wycombe.

Item lego eisdem Custodibus j.d redditus
percipiendi de tenemento quod quondam fuit
Serche ad opus fabrice ecclesie.

Under date September 1363 the Leger Book again contains (f. lxxvj.) reference *Custodibus operis Cantarie beate Marie in Wycombe* in a lease by the Mayor and commonalty of a vacant place in Crendon Lane to John Gous. And on f. lxxvij^b is a note of the proving in March 1363-4, before the Dean of Wycombe, of the will of Walter Smyth, and of the bequest therein *custodibus operis Cantarie beate Marie* of a shop, etc. "inveniundo inde annuatim coram ymagine beate Marie Cantarie predicte unum cereum iiiij^{or} librarum cere."

The four *custodes operis beate Marie* are also referred to in 1367,* 1370-1, † 1375, ‡ and 1378. ||

Such an expression as *custodes operis* is commonly used when some building is in progress, but it is difficult to see what work can have been going on in such a structure as the Lady Chapel from 1339 to 1378; and the chapel itself shows no traces of it. Perhaps the phrase has here a more general meaning.

In a few deeds of the fifteenth century the wardens are simply described as *custodes cantarie beate Marie* § or *custodes capelle*, ¶ and early in the sixteenth century as "the wardens of or lady," or "wardens of the Chapell of our ladie." **

It will be seen from these many extracts that the mass of Our Lady, the lamps before the altar, the light before her image, and the Lady Chapel itself can all be associated with one and the same building; and the position of this is finally fixed by an indenture of 29th September, 18 Henry VII. (1502), between the four wardens of the parish church and one Nicholas

* Lease by John Geyr.

† Lease by William Frere.

‡ Will of Peter Shiplake in Leger Book, f. lxxiiij.

|| Lease by the four Wardens.

§ Grant in 1431 by Thomas Merston and others.

¶ Indenture of 1448 between two of the Wardens and William Redhood; and another deed of 1460.

** Leger Book, ff lxxvij and lxxxiiij.

Wynshurste, leasing to him a tenement on payment of a yearly rent of 4s. to themselves and of 2d. "*Gardianis Capelle beate Marie in Ecclesia predicta et successoribus suis.*"

In the will dated 1504 of John Petefere (quoted above) is a bequest of £3 6s. 8d. "to the making of a wyndowe in the chapell of our blissed lady;" and in that of John Wilcockys, made in 1506, after a bequest of £1 3s. 4d. "to the reparacion of or lady chapell," is the direction: "I will that myn executors shal content and pay for all the charges and costes in newe glasyng of the oon of the wyndowes in the same chapell."

As the former bequest can refer only to the east window of the chapel, since the others are all of the 13th century, it was probably made larger as we now see it by John Petefere's bequest, and glazed by that of John Wilcockys.

The inventory of the chapel taken in 1518-19 mentions "a Curten clothe for or lady lofte." This loft was probably upon that portion of the roodscreen which traversed the arch from the north transept into the lady chapel, and therefore one of "the iij rode lofte" mentioned in Chapman's contract.

The Bower altar evidently stood in some screened-off part of the church, which was therefore called "the bour chauncell," and the inventory of 1518-19 specifies "ij laten candilstykkē on the bowre aulter" and "ij laten Standardē," or standing candlesticks in the chapel wherein it stood. The chaplain who served it is described in a view of frankpledge of 1477 as "le Bowre-preist," and in conjunction with another chaplain called "oure lady preist." It is probable therefore that "the bourchauncell" formed part of or adjoined the Lady Chapel. It might well have been under one of the arches between the latter and the chancel. A will of 1543, quoted above, shews that it was large enough to bury in.

Whence the Bower altar obtained its name I have not been able to learn, but the following document in the Leger Book may possibly throw some light upon it:

f. lxij. Memorandum quod Cum Johannes le Bowyer tempore domini Edwardi Regis filii Regis Henrici

concessit idedōia [sic] * ecclesie de Wycombe Tres Torcheas Cere qualibet Torchea iiij ti Cere de certis tenementis in Burgo de Wycombe inveniend. postmodum dictus Johannes dedit per cartam suam Waltero de Sunle tenementum suum quod jacet inter tenementum Willelmi Gerveys et tenementum Ricardi de Hurley et tres solidos redditus de tenementi Willelmi Gerveys & duodecim denarios Redditus de tenemento quod fuit Gregorij le Barbour. In qua Carta Continetur quod dictus Walterus et heredes sui et assignati de Redditibus et tenementis predictis inveniend. annuatim predictas tres Torcheas viz. duas in Festo Assumpcionis beate Marie et unam in Festo Nativitatis Domini ad quam solucionem sic faciendam predictum tenementum cum Redditibus onerata sunt imperpetuum, etc.

The positions of the Jesus and Resurrection altars, and those of St. Clement and St. Erasmus, are likewise matters of conjecture. Perhaps the two former originally stood in the transepts and the two latter in the aisles; but it is impossible at present to locate them with certainty. Two of them may have stood under the middlemost roodloft on either side the quire door.

The inventory of the church goods taken in 1552 mentions the hangings at "the high aulter" and for the "other ij aulters," also "iiij herez (hairclothes) for the iij aulters." It seems therefore that at the destruction of altars *temp.* Edward VI. those then in the church were not all pulled down, but two were left standing besides the high altar. These were probably the Lady altar and that of St. Nicholas and St. Katherine in the chancel aisles.

The church unfortunately contains no remains of its old fittings except some bench ends and fragments of screenwork, and a great oak chest bounden with iron; altar, font, pulpit, pews, all are new.

A few of the old bench ends and some pieces of tracery are built into the quire seats, which occupy a raised

* This word is plainly so written in the MS. I can only suggest that in transcribing it the clerk has misread a contracted form of "in dedicacione." If so, the memorandum contains a hitherto unnoticed dedication of the church in the reign of Edward I., necessitated probably by the large structural alterations which the church underwent *circa* 1275.

platform before the chancel in the first bay of the nave. Here also is a line of four octagonal posts, two $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, two $4\frac{3}{4}$ feet high, with curiously-carved capitals; apparently the cut-down supports of the projecting front of the old rood-loft.

Some other fragments of screenwork, with part of an inscription, are now incorporated in a modern screen filling the western arch of the south chapel. Langley, describing the condition of the church in his time (c. 1797), writes:

"The aisles of the church and chancel are divided by an ancient carved screen of oak, and on the north side is the following inscription:

Praye for the soules of Rycharde Redhode,
 Agnes hys wyfe, ther son William and
 Johan hys wyfe, the whyche —————
 — p — as — wyth — yere off oure Lord
 God 1468 on soules God —————*

The late Mr. John Parker, writing in 1878, says:

"The Aisles of the Church and Chancel were both divided by ancient carved screens or parcloes, which were erected by Mr. William Redehode, to whom reference has already been made.

The screen of the South Chancel Aisle had a well-preserved inscription in Oak, as follows:—

'Praye for the Soules of Rycharde Redehode, Agnes his Wyfe, the whyche Richard bilded this parclose with tymbre in the yere of oure Lord God 1468 on ——— Soules ——— God.'

These Screens were some few years ago removed, which is much to be regretted by the admirers of Church Architecture."†

Lastly, Mr. R. S. Downs, in a paper on the church in *Records of Buckinghamshire* for 1895, says that

"Towards the close of the fifteenth century (the south chapel) was separated from the rest of the building by a handsome oaken parclose, erected by Richard Redhead. This screen bore the following inscription in old English charac-

* *History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough*, 35.

† *Early History and Antiquities of Wycombe*, 104.

ters:—‘ Praye for the Soules of Rycherde Rede-
hede, Agnes hys wyfe, ther son William and
Johan hys wyfe, the whyche Richard bilded
this parclose with tymbre in the yere off oure
Lord God MCCCCLXVIII., on whos soules God
have mercie. Amen.’ ” †

This last seems to be the most correct rendering of the inscription, of which there now remain only the words:

**Praye for the Soules of Rycherde Redehede,
Agnes hys wyfe ther son Willm & Johan
hys wyfe the whyche pclose**

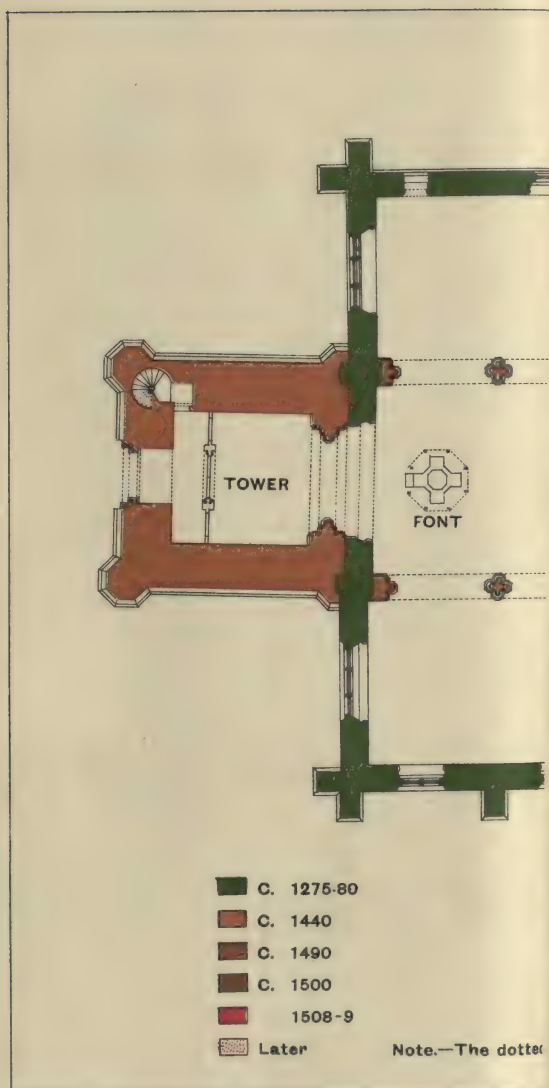
It is not easy from the three foregoing accounts of eye-witnesses to say where the lost screens actually stood, but if within the arches of the chancel arcades the date 1468 is of interest as marking the year of their completion.

The accompanying ground plan (Plate viii.) has been specially drawn for this paper by Mr. Thomas Thurlow, of High Wycombe, architect, but I am myself responsible for the colouring.

The photographs reproduced on Plates ii., iv., v., vi., and vii. were specially taken for this paper by Mr. J. C. Parker

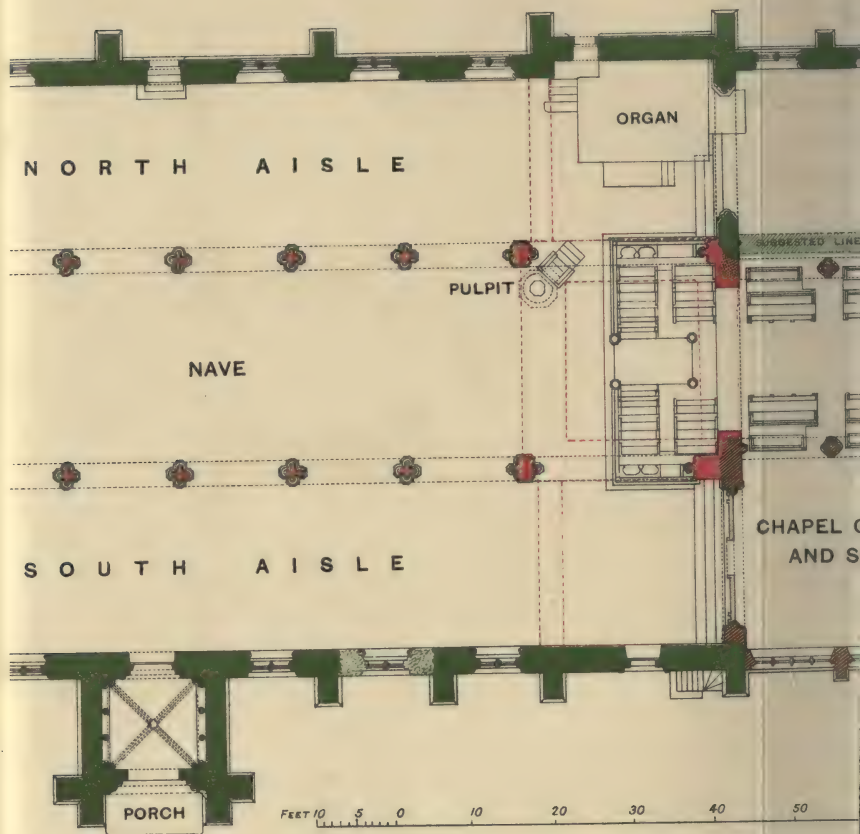
W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE, M.A.

† *Records of Buckinghamshire*, vii. 275.



C.F. HELL & SON.

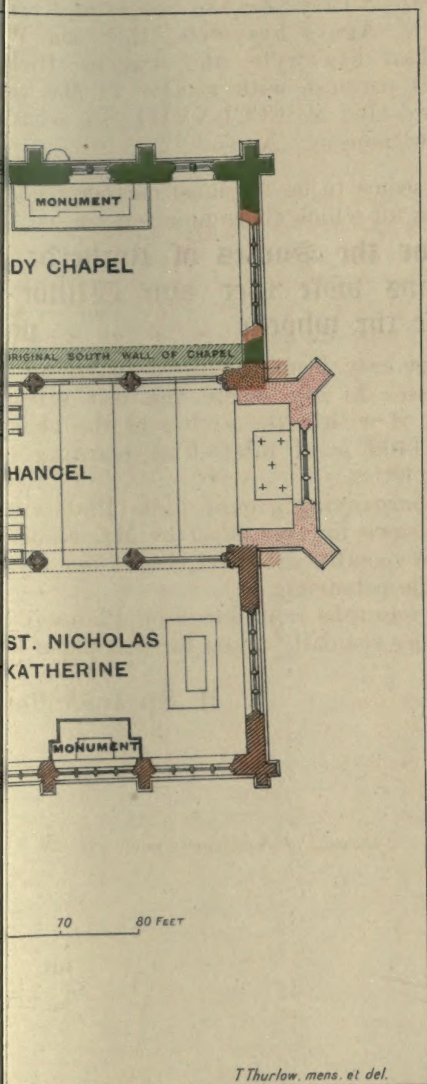
THE PARISH CHURCH



Red lines show work removed in 1508-9.

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, HIGH WYCOMBE: HISTORICAL

Plate VIII.



GROUND PLAN.

